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ABSTRACT

Results of research and evaluation efforts are just beginning to shed some light on how to create and maintain high-quality after-school programs. This research roundup reviews five documents that touch upon a range of issues related to the developing field of after-school programming. "Getting School-Based After-School Programming Off the Ground" (Grossman, Walker, & Raley, 2001) shares preliminary findings regarding what it takes to plan and launch school-based after-school programs. "Extended Learning Initiatives: Opportunities and Implementation Challenges" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2000) provides detailed profiles of state-sponsored extended-learning initiatives operating in six states. "Sustainability in School-Linked After-School Programs: Leadership, Program Quality, and Sustainability" (Pechman & Féister, 2002) gives practitioners, funders, and policymakers a better understanding of the challenges involved in sustaining emerging after-school programs. "When Schools Stay Open Late: The National Evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program" (U.S. Department of Education, 2003) reports on first-year findings from a sample of sites in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program. "Afterschool Education: Approaches to an Emerging Field" (Noam, Biancarosa, & Dechausay, 2003) provides an overview of current knowledge and practices to help "scaffold" future development in the field of after-school education. (Author/WFA)

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After-school Programs. Research Roundup.

Linda Lumsden

Fall 2003

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Research roundup
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
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After-school Programs

Linda Lumsden

Empty houses await about seven million school-age children after school. In addition to those in "self care," many more children and youth are involved in a patchwork of marginal after-school arrangements, or they "hang out" unsupervised in other settings until their parents get home from work. Where they go, who they are with, and what they do during the intervening hours between when the school day ends and when their parents arrive home can have important implications for students' intellectual, social, and emotional development.

After-school programs are perceived by many as a way of increasing constructive out-of-school options for students. Public support for after-school programs is strong and several states have recently adopted after-school initiatives.

After-school programs have the potential, say their advocates, to meet the needs of children and youth during the hours of the day when they are most vulnerable. Programs provide safe, supervised places for children to participate in academic and enrichment activities, and form positive relationships with peers and adults.

Unfortunately, the quality of existing after-school programs varies greatly. Results of research and evaluation efforts are just beginning to shed some light on how to create and maintain high-quality programs. The documents reviewed here touch upon a range of issues related to the developing field of after-school programming.

Jean Baldwin Grossman and colleagues share preliminary findings regarding what it takes to plan and launch school-based after-school programs.

The Council of Chief State School Officers provides detailed profiles of state-sponsored extended learning initiatives operating in six states.

Ellen Peckman and Leila Feister give practitioners, funders, and policymakers a better understanding of the challenges involved in sustaining emerging after-school programs.

The U.S. Department of Education reports on first-year findings from a sample of sites in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program.

Gil Noam and colleagues provide an overview of current knowledge and practices to help "scaffold" future development in the field of after-school education.

Linda Lumsden is associate editor of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management at the University of Oregon.

Grossman, Jean Baldwin; Karen Walker; and Rebecca Raley. **Getting School-Based After-School Programming Off the Ground.** Paper presented at the seminar on Out-of-School Time, May 10-11, 2001, by the Joblessness and Urban Poverty Research Program, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Available online at **www.ksg.harvard.edu/urbanpoverty/Sitepages/UrbanSeminar/OutofSchool/grossman.pdf.**

Although there is currently keen interest in after-school programs, "little is known about how best to implement them in school buildings," according to Grossman and colleagues. The preliminary findings discussed in the paper should help communities and schools be aware of what it takes to get a program off the ground, what initial challenges are likely to arise, and how other programs have dealt with these challenges.

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The 17 cities included in this study all adapted one of four nationally recognized Extended Service School (ESS) models. The study found that "assembling the resources to start and sustain the programs was and still is a major challenge." However, start-up financial resources obtained from foundations strengthened the ability of programs to obtain additional funding and to acquire other resources, such as donations of office and program space.

Each city hired a coordinator to manage daily operation of the program, embedding the position in one of three types of school-level governance structures: shared decision-making by a lead agency and a school-level council; governance by a small team of stakeholders, including the principal; or oversight by a lead agency and its staff members.

Cities with only one participating school tended to use small governance teams that included the principal. This arrangement worked well for planning and oversight functions, but team members often lacked both the time and expertise to pursue long-term funding sources. Cities with several participating schools often had city-level oversight committees as part of their governance structure. These committees coordinated policies and activities across schools and committee members were often experienced in identifying and securing long-term funding.

Establishing positive relationships with principals, teachers, and custodians helped program personnel gain access to school space and facilitated expansion of available space over time, as well as maintenance of the space. Some programs coordinated their use of space with custodians' cleaning schedules.

At some sites, daily transportation, another common challenge for programs, was provided by community partners. At one site, a school shared busing costs with a local Head Start program. In other instances, the YMCA or a university partner allowed use of their vehicles for field trips.

Council of Chief State School Officers. **Extended Learning Initiatives: Opportunities and Implementation Challenges.** Washington, D.C.: Author, May 2000. 56 pages. Available online at **www.ccsso.org.**

Aware of the desire among state education officials and others to have "research-based evidence of what works, for which student populations, and how best to overcome challenges to implementation," the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) developed and administered a 40-item open-ended survey that allowed them to profile state-sponsored extended learning initiatives operating in six states—California, Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Texas.

One of the initiatives featured is the Minnesota After-School Enrichment Program, which was established as a pilot initiative in 1996 and gained permanent status in 1999. The program—completely state-funded and coordinated by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning—targets youth who are struggling academically and/or have had involvement with the juvenile justice system. Each project funded through the initiative incorporates tutoring, though the design of programming is controlled by each local community.

To obtain funding through the Minnesota program, a local program submits a grant application, which is reviewed by a citizen group that makes recommendations to state education officials. Programs that receive funding hire external evaluators to conduct formal evaluations. These evaluations are designed to determine how well programs are meeting one or more of the following seven outcome goals identified in the legislation that created the initiative:

- Have more children participate in adult-supervised program during non-school hours.
- Provide academic support.
- Lower juvenile crime.
- Improve school attendance and reduce suspensions.
- Increase youth involvement in community service and other activities that promote character development, strengthen families, and instill community values.
- Strengthen students' skills in technology, arts, sports, and other areas.
- Provide academic support and foster character development among adolescent parents.

Early on, factors found to be barriers to enrollment in Minnesota included lack of affordable, dependable transportation, the absence of a stable cadre of program providers, lack of sufficient volunteers and volunteer training, and high staff turnover. The transportation challenge, common to most programs, was addressed by recruiting volunteer drivers, having local government cover the bus fee, and working with local school districts to secure funding for busing.

About ERIC

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, 5207 University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403-5207. Phone 800-438-8841.
Web site: **http://eric.uoregon.edu**

Pechman, Ellen; and Leila Feister. Sustainability in School-Linked After-School Programs: Leadership, Program Quality, and Sustainability. Washington, D.C.: Policy Studies Associates, October 2002. 35 pages. Available online at www.policystudies.com/FINAL%20Issue%20Brief%20Nov2002WEB.pdf

This study, conducted in 2001, was designed to give practitioners, funders, and policymakers a better understanding of the challenges involved in sustaining emerging after-school programs. Researchers conducted telephone interviews with more than 60 experts and program leaders and reviewed existing literature on sustainability. In-depth interviews were held with program leaders of 10 long-running programs, and researchers visited three of these programs.

Four major lessons about program leadership and sustainability emerged from the study:

- The sustainability of after-school initiatives depends on leaders' managerial skills and political savvy.
- External partnerships based on wise partner selection help to sustain after-school programs but do not guarantee permanence.
- Programs and funders need research-based guidance to determine appropriate funding priorities.
- After-school programs need diverse funding, especially from state and local sources, to achieve sustainability.

Implications for research, policy, and funding that relate to the link between program quality and sustainability include the following:

- If policymakers were to commit funds for cycles of five years or more, this would help stabilize program priorities and staffing.
- Peer relationships, new experiences, and youth choices—not traditional classroom academics—are the program features that attract most participants and hold the interest of youth.
- Although many after-school programs have documented positive effects, evidence of academic impact is just beginning to emerge.
- Evaluation can strengthen program quality, but it poses administrative challenges.

U.S. Department of Education. When Schools Stay Open Late: The National Evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program. Washington, D.C.: Author, 2003. 174 pages. Available online at www.ed.gov/pubs/21cent/firstyear/firstyear.pdf.

President Bush used the findings of this first-year report on the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, part of the No Child Left Behind Act, as the basis for recommending a 40 percent cut in federal after-school funding for fiscal year 2004. Since the report was released in February 2003, it has been criticized on several grounds. Seven members of the study's technical working group released a statement indicating that the study has "serious flaws" and that some of the conclusions made in the report are not justified (see "After-School Report Called Into Question," *Education Week*, May 21, 2003, pp. 1, 15).

Conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. and Decision Information Resources, Inc., the evaluation examined the characteristics and outcomes of a small sample of school-based after-school programs that receive federal funding through the 21st Century Learning Centers program.

Key preliminary findings about the impact of the programs studied included the following:

- For elementary school students, reading levels and grades in most subjects were comparable for after-school participants and similar nonparticipants, and differences were not found in the areas of homework and assignment completion. At the middle school level, grades in most subjects were comparable for participants and similar nonparticipants. However, math scores were higher among participants.
- The programs increased the percentage of children being cared for by adults rather than older siblings, but the percentage of children in self-care remained unchanged. Participants' sense of safety did not appear to improve, and various measures of student behavior, such as selling or using drugs, did not appear to be affected by their participation in the after-school programs sampled. Among participants, there was no evidence of improvement in developmental skills such as planning, setting goals, working in teams, or conflict resolution.
- Parental involvement was greater among after-school program participants than among nonparticipants. Those sites studied were judged largely successful in developing working relationships with teachers and principals.
- According to the report, there was little evidence of collaboration with other community organizations and minimal effort devoted to finding ways of sustaining the programs after the end of the grant period.

Noam, Gil G.; Gina Biancarosa; and Nadine Dechausay. Afterschool Education: Approaches to an Emerging Field. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Press, 2003. 120 pages. Available from Harvard Education Publishing Group, 8 Story Street, 5th Floor, Cambridge, MA 02138. 800-513-0763. $21.95.

"Our motivation for researching the existing knowledge and practices in afterschool settings was to help 'scaffold' the field's development by creating typologies that will help practitioners, researchers, and policy-

makers in the field evolve a clear and coherent plan of action," say Noam and colleagues.

In chapter 1, the authors discuss the rationale behind linking after-school programs to the school day, noting that after-school programs can serve as bridges between school and home. Chapter 2 focuses on the place of homework in after-school programming. Programs studied by Noam and colleagues conceptualized homework in three basic ways: as task completion; as an opportunity to build relationships and target tutoring; and as an inspiration for enriched learning activities. Factors that compromised programs' ability to offer effective homework assistance included inconsistent attendance, limited experience, and lack of ability of volunteers; inability to distinguish between tutoring and homework help, which have different goals; and lack of resources, such as textbooks, computers, and Internet access.

In chapter 3, after emphasizing that any educational undertaking in an after-school setting should be "engaging and fun," Noam and colleagues set forth some principles around which to organize enrichment activities. Programs should connect learning to children's experiences and interests and embody "authentic and collaborative learning and more informal relationships with adults, all of which contribute to giving children a greater sense of ownership of their own learning, thus reinforcing the motivation to learn." □

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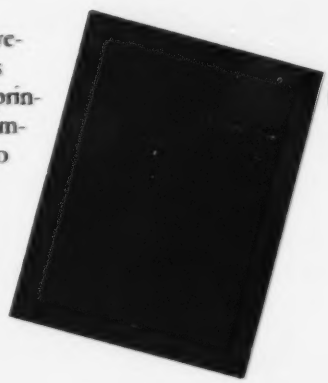
After-School Programs & the K-8 Principal: Standards for Quality School-Age Child Care

by NAESP

Principals, teachers, and parents agree on the urgent need for quality after-school programs. Research shows that students in after-school programs demonstrate improved academic achievement, better attitudes toward school, and less likelihood of engaging in violent behaviors. This practical guide incorporates over three decades of research with the first-hand knowledge of principals. You'll find guidelines for ensuring sound management practices, suggestions for programming that combine recreation and learning, examples of exemplary practices, and a checklist to assist in program evaluation and improvement.



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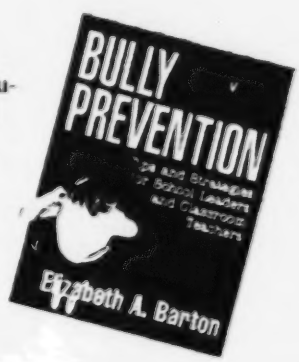
Bully Prevention

by Elizabeth A. Barton

In the past, bullying in school had been dismissed as an unpleasant rite of passage. Today, educators, parents, and students recognize the damage bullying can inflict. This guide for school leaders and educators defines the bully-victim-witness relationship and offers guidelines for identifying bullying behaviors. Learn how educators can intervene, using conflict resolution techniques and methods for developing students' social skills.



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